



## Highlights of the *Self-Study Report*

### Highlights of Eastern Illinois University's *2004 Self-Study Report*

Eastern's self-study yielded a wealth of information on which to base conclusions about how well the institution meets the criteria required by the Higher Learning Commission. Just as important, it also offered critical insights into what has made a university with hundred-year-old roots in the state normal school tradition into a vibrant, twenty-first century teaching and learning institution well respected by its stakeholders and well known for providing high caliber education in the arts, humanities, sciences, and professions. These attributes of Eastern's excellence include the following:

1. An emphasis on learning partnerships
2. The effective integration of technology in teaching and learning
3. A network of services that support student achievement
4. The extension of teaching and learning into external communities
5. A sound program for assessing and improving student learning
6. A common focus on using resources wisely and building for the future

Each of these characteristics is described below in conjunction with a summary of relevant initiatives Eastern has undertaken or enhanced since its last self-study.

#### **An Emphasis on Learning Partnerships**

Eastern's Mission Statement speaks to the university's "superior" education and its goals to assist students to become "responsible citizens" who think critically, act ethically, and communicate effectively. Chapters three, four, and five provide numerous illustrations of one of Eastern's primary means of addressing this educational mission: by building partnerships for learning. These partnerships enrich practica, independent studies, internships, research projects, creative activities, and service learning programs. All of them increase the effectiveness of the traditional classroom learning environment by teaming students with faculty, staff, and/or other learners on and off campus and by guiding them to apply what they have learned.

Since the last self-study, the university has increased dramatically its emphasis on teaching students through application, collaboration, and scholarship. Of the approximately sixty-five majors and minors at Eastern, nearly fifty now have in place an internship, field placement, and/or student teaching program which allows students to enhance their educational and professional growth through the application of knowledge and skills in non-university settings. And thus, Communication Studies majors serve as interns with ABC Sports on the production of the Indianapolis 500, while history majors participate in the Coles County Legal History Project. Each summer, Eastern's annual Geology Field Camp requires students to put away their map boards and work side-by-side with faculty collecting research data for projects such as a Global Positioning Systems study of the Yellowstone Caldera or a thermal study of hot springs in the Lower Geyser Basin. Similarly, Honors students have participated in archaeological research as part of a study abroad experience in Belgium, where they helped to excavate a medieval castle.

Altogether, Eastern's student teachers spend over 324,000 hours in P-12 classrooms each year. Each education major now also completes 110-400 hours of pre-student teaching practica, work that may



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occur in the workshops art majors prepare and teach to middle school and high school students, for example, or in programs such as Project WOW (Wonders of Wisdom), a collaborative venture between Elementary Education majors and an area elementary school that is now in its sixth year of operation. Through Project WOW, education majors learn how to teach using cooperative strategies, cross grade-level teams, and research guided by children's questioning as they implement curricula of their own design: The Fall 2003 curriculum focused on American heroes, including George Washington, Eleanor Roosevelt, and John Muir; the Spring 2004 program featured Lewis and Clark. The project also provides students experience in integrating cultural, historical, environmental, geographic, and scientific knowledge with computer technology. As one other example, pre-service teachers may participate in the new School-based Cohort Initiative Program (SCIP), a pilot program begun with selected freshman who, as they work in the elementary classrooms, begin to build a community of learners with whom they remain engaged during their field placements for the duration of their degree program.

On campus, students have many opportunities to learn through scholarly activity. Since 1999, Eastern students have participated in the Legislative Showcase, for example, an annual opportunity for them to demonstrate to state legislators that student scholarship has the potential to impact the citizens of Illinois. The theme of the 2003 Showcase was "Eastern Illinois University Impacting the Quality of Life in Illinois," and it reflected presentations that included one student's research on the effect of smoking on the walking improvements of patients with peripheral vascular diseases, and that of another student who discussed his work examining the relationship between crime and public expenditures. Collaborative partnerships with faculty also strengthen student scholarship. Last year, for example, faculty in the Department of Chemistry offered twenty-seven collaborative research projects for undergraduate students and eight for graduate students, in addition to co-authoring journal publications and conference presentations with many others. Faculty members in Biological Sciences mentor more than fifty undergraduate students each academic year, and a large majority of these students present the results of their research at scientific conferences throughout the country. One of the department's majors was chosen as one of the "Top Young Botanists" in the United States, and several undergraduate students received Outstanding Paper or Poster awards at scientific conferences. Business majors conduct faculty-directed research of use to area businesses, including studies of industry needs for a hotel facility in a nearby town and marketing research for a new portable basketball system designed by a sports equipment manufacturer. Similarly, music faculty collaborate with majors by coordinating, arranging, and conducting over 120 student ensemble concerts and individual recitals each year, while theatre faculty and students work side-by-side to produce six full plays, four student-directed one-act plays, and one children's theatre production each year.

Partnerships with units outside the academic area enrich the teaching and learning environment as well. Staff members from Student Affairs co-teach the University Foundations course, but they also provide curriculum themselves, offering workshops and seminars in life skills, healthy lifestyles, career development, study skills, leadership training, and many other areas. The Radio-TV Center (RTC) partners with the Communication Studies and Journalism departments to improve the quality of paraprofessional training these students receive, and as a result, *NewsWatch*, the daily evening news program produced entirely by students, is currently ranked by the Illinois Broadcasters Association as the best collegiate news production in the State. Another partnership between the Radio-TV Center and the History Department allowed a graduate student to work with an RTC producer to develop and produce a documentary on the role of African-Americans in Coles County. Through a partnership with state employers, nearly one hundred Eastern students also are able to participate in



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the Cooperative Work Study Program sponsored by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). The IBHE awards Eastern grant funds for this program, funds that are then matched by local agencies and businesses. Through the program, student interns are placed in discipline-related work sites located throughout the state: local and state government offices, legal professions, health and social welfare agencies, newspapers, public relations and design firms, and businesses and industries.

Co-curricular service learning activities enable Eastern students to couple discipline-related practice with community service. Students majoring in Foreign Languages provide after school programming to grade schoolers, for example, while those in Recreation Administration offer evening recreational activities for individuals who are developmentally or mentally disabled. Students in Elementary Education support programs such as Reading is Fundamental, Adopt a Student, and Head Start. Political Science majors assist with voter registration, while majors in Communication Disorders and Sciences support the Speech-Language-Hearing Clinic. Annually, over six hundred Eastern students help to staff the statewide Special Olympics competition. Physical Education students administer fitness assessments to hundreds of community members participating in health or athletics programs, while Health Studies coordinates a high school health fair every semester, as well as an annual university health fair. Its students, along with those from Communication Studies, support a regional program called “I Sing the Body Electric,” designed to educate high school students in healthy behaviors.

New in 2004, Eastern’s Presidential Scholars Program is a concentrated scholarship and citizenship experience designed to foster and promote academic and personal excellence. It provides highly qualified students an eight-semester tuition and fees scholarship, a specially designed Honors First-Year Seminar focusing on critical thinking, leadership, and citizenship, one-on-one faculty mentoring, and a tailored sophomore/junior year experience that may include independent research, internship, study abroad, and/or a citizenship/service learning project. As such, it brings together all of the elements that create an effective learning environment.

Partnerships with other students, faculty, staff, and the local community make learning more powerful. They also create higher expectations for learning that students model in their future professions. This is part of Eastern’s legacy to its students. And its impact is visible in students’ attitudes toward the institution. On the NCA Self-Study Survey, an overwhelming majority (79%) of students who responded agreed or strongly agreed that the “majority of my teachers have been effective” (Item 23); a total of 93% expressed at least some level of agreement. Results from the most recent IBHE Alumni Survey show that almost 78% were positive or strongly positive about their major, while 93% were at least somewhat positive. They also reveal that students’ relationships with their professors/advisors had the most positive impact on them during their time at Eastern. Respondents based this conclusion on professors knowing their names, providing them with individual attention, and being approachable, caring, and accessible, as well as excellent role models and experts in their fields. These conclusions are explained, in part, by the responses to another item on the NCA Self-Study Survey: Ninety-six percent of faculty and 86% of students believe that “[s]tudents are Eastern’s highest priority” (Item 2).

### **The Effective Integration of Technology in Teaching and Learning**

Since Eastern’s last self-study, it has made tremendous progress at integrating technology in its teaching and learning activities, progress enabled by Eastern’s recognition of the importance of technology to its mission and its subsequent decision to significantly improve supporting technical



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and administrative infrastructures. A new campus network became operational in Fall 2004. The \$6 million campus intranet project replaces the university's 1990s-technology Token Ring network--which had operated unreliably with data transmission speeds of just sixteen megabits per second--with a wide bandwidth, gigabit-speed system that features state-of-the-art Ethernet connections for all computers, Category 6 horizontal cabling, a fiber optic trunk line between buildings, three network hubs instead of one, and Cisco network electronics. More robust virus protection and a firewall are also part of the upgrade, which includes "watchdog" software that will detect when personal computers are infected with viruses and will automatically disable the infected computers' ports to protect the network. One hundred wireless access ports also are being installed throughout campus as part of the project. Designated wireless areas will exist in each building, although no building will have wireless access throughout its entirety. Emphasis will be placed on classrooms and common areas such as lounges and study areas for students.

Since the last self-study, Eastern has developed 117 multimedia-equipped classrooms and twenty-three computer labs. One project, the English Technology Integrated Classroom (ETIC), has affected almost all native students taking required first-year writing classes at Eastern. The English Technology-Integrated Classrooms (ETIC) consist of paired teaching and learning environments. Two laboratory classrooms contain networked computers for students, and two regular classrooms contain one networked computer, nominally the instructor's. In the laboratory classrooms, students work at computers on tables designed to accommodate both collaborative and individual work. In addition, the instructor's station is connected to an LCD panel and overhead projector, which allows the projection onscreen of anything on the teacher's monitor. In the paired, regular classrooms, instructors use the computer for demonstrating software (such as FTP for uploading documents to student web sites or servers) or for large-group discussions of particular documents or exercises (which are shown onscreen via an overhead LCD projector). Just as frequently, students use the computer for presenting assignments or projects to the entire class, using PowerPoint or web-based software.

Assessment data collected by the English Department suggest that as a result of the ETIC, students write more and write more often. Using technology helps them to improve their writing, to revise their work, and to revise more often. It expands their research capabilities beyond the bounds of a card catalog and toward a better understanding of library and of web resources, and it allows them to become more comfortable using computers for writing and research in other courses. In fact, because students find the ETIC so conducive to learning, they prefer to be placed in ETIC sections, recommend the ETIC to others, and request that more courses on campus be offered in technology-integrated classrooms. Because it fosters active, student-centered learning, faculty members also note that the ETIC has invigorated their teaching. The English Technology-Integrated Classrooms thus serve as an exceptional model for the application of technology to teaching and learning.

Projects like the ETIC have been supported by Eastern's development of the administrative, educational, and physical infrastructure prerequisite to its successful integration of technology in its teaching and learning activities. Working in conjunction with Information Technology Services, the Center for Academic Technology Support (CATS) provides this administrative structure for the academic area. CATS came into being as a result of the Technology-Enhanced and -Delivered Education (TEDE) initiative inaugurated in 2001: President Surles charged the academic area to take seriously the statewide goal to offer superior yet *accessible* undergraduate and graduate education, and she supported this commitment by investing \$500,000 in the TEDE initiative. As a result, CATS was created and empowered to provide instructional technology-related professional development,



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training activities, and informational seminars to Eastern faculty and staff under the umbrella of TECnet, a network of individuals on campus who are working together to help others increase their knowledge and skills so they may integrate technology into academic programs effectively. Initially, CATS focused its energies on developing the human and physical infrastructure needed for its operations: hiring a technology coordinator and a graphic designer and developing the Technology-Integrated Teaching and Learning Environment (TITL) Room, a campus resource equipped with wireless technology, twenty-four laptops, two data projectors, whiteboard, printer, scanner, and the instructor's presentation station. Now CATS focuses on enhancing access to and use of academic technology, assisting faculty, staff, and administrators on nearly one hundred projects each year. Examples include course enhancements in the use of technology, development of training materials for specific software applications, streaming video content for instructional purposes, development of online surveys for collection of research data, web page design for departments, creation of multimedia presentations, and the formation of web-based resources and other materials for inclusion in WebCT courses. It also has created a series of tutorials for WebCT. The "WebCT Faculty Starter Kit" and the "WebCT Student Starter Kit" are available as online resources on the CATS web site. CATS also initiated professional development grants which provide faculty and staff with resources to complete workshops, courses, training, or related activities that will help them improve their technological skills and knowledge in order to enhance, deliver, and/or support classes and programs through the use of instructional technology. In addition, it developed the annual "Technology Day" celebration and recognition of the many individuals, groups, and programs contributing to shape Eastern's technology vision and reality. The spotlight for the celebration focuses on the faculty members being recognized for their "Excellence in the Use of Technology."

Technology also has been used to increase efficiency/improve performance in Alumni Services, Financial Aid, University Police, Records, Radio/TV, Housing, Career Services, and Judicial Affairs, among others. One of the resulting projects, Panther Access to Web Services (PAWS), is an online information resource for all students. Via a common web browser, PAWS allows students to view secure information about their status at Eastern. They can register for classes; view schedules, grades, transcript evaluations, degree audits, and financial aid awards; and obtain information about WebCT. This service has reduced paperwork, foot traffic, and phone calls in the Records, Registration, and Financial Aid offices. To ensure that those using technology have immediate access to the support they need, each division in the academic area now employs a technology specialist. Likewise, the Information Technology Services (ITS) has established a universal Help Desk which consolidates all ITS client support and assistance services into one unit, centrally located at the Gregg Triad Open Computer Lab, with expanded staffing, enlarged scope, greater accountability, and a renewed commitment to service. The Eastern Events Calendar, an online tool to enhance communication about technology-related services, now provides faculty and staff with access to a daily schedule of professional development activities. In addition to a searchable database, the calendar provides the viewer with daily, weekly, and monthly schedules of workshops, courses, and presentations on a variety of topics including Composer, Excel, Fireworks, HTML, PowerPoint, and WebCT.

While small classes taught by faculty who take a student-centered approach to education have been traditional hallmarks of excellence at Eastern, over the last decade many changes have occurred in the way teaching and learning take place. Not surprisingly, the most striking changes are related to technology. Ninety-one percent of the student respondents to the Self-Study Survey reported having been exposed to "technology-enhanced instruction," and 87% of those found it valuable (Item 27t). In response to NCA Self-Study Survey Item 6, 64% of students, faculty, civil service personnel, and



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administrators agreed or strongly agreed that they had seen improvement in the technology available to them during their time at Eastern; almost 82% expressed at least some level of agreement.

### **A Network of Services that Support Student Achievement**

Eastern is fortunate to have a network of support services that connect or are connected by staff members in all four vice presidential areas who are dedicated to supporting student achievement. Individuals from Housing, Student Life, Records, Judicial Affairs, Orientation, the Health Education Resource Center, the Counseling Center, Disability Services, the Center for Academic Support and Achievement, Planning and Institutional Studies, University Police, the Provost's Office, and other areas work together in such groups as the Academic Retention Committee, the Campus Advising Network, the University Foundations Committee, the Problem Assessment Team, the Convocation Committee, and the Enrollment Management Advisory Committee, sharing questions, concerns, advice, and expertise. They work together to plan freshman and transfer orientation programs, to develop retention strategies, to improve tutorial centers, to strengthen academic integrity, to improve the dissemination of information, and to enhance campus safety. And they in turn share their initiatives with the faculty to increase awareness of/implement solutions for the issues students face. By participating in these networks, staff members are able to provide a heightened level of guidance and referral to Eastern students.

Among this network of services, Eastern is fortunate to have continued its centralized advising system, the Academic Advising Center: Nearly 96% of new freshmen responding to a survey indicated that advising services were "useful" or "extremely useful." The Academic Advising Center also is distinctive in being part of a larger advising support network that includes specialized advising programs for athletes, honors students, and others who may be less well prepared for college; a combination of faculty and professional advisors at the department and school level who serve their own majors; and a variety of other programs whose focus is student retention and graduation. The Academic Retention Committee, for example, is a new group devoted to increasing Eastern's already high retention rate, while EIU4 is a new guaranteed four-year graduation program. EIU4 began in 2002, providing intrusive course progress monitoring and advising support to assist students timely graduation.

Eastern's Minority Affairs unit is not new, but in using its very limited resources to do a very successful job at retaining and graduating minority students, it is a model for other institutions. Its network of support services, so crucial to the success of minority students, includes the Gateway Program, a provisional admissions program designed to meet the needs of students who have the potential to do college work but do not meet regular admissions requirements; and the Peer Helper/Student Mentoring Program, which pairs new students with upperclassmen to help them transition successfully to Eastern, both socially and academically. Since the last NCA visit, the Minority Affairs unit also secured grant funding for a TRIO Program so that it may assist 175 first-generation college students and/or students with disabilities. The program provides academic assistance, career and academic planning, personal counseling, cultural enrichment opportunities, financial guidance, disability accommodations, and leadership development. It also offers a mentoring program in which faculty mentors meet with students regularly in informal sessions to give academic and personal encouragement. Mentors provide referrals for assistance, personal and professional development, and help with any other needs the student may have.



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This student success network is augmented by the Campus Advising Network (CAN), inaugurated in Spring 2001 to improve the dissemination of advising information. And it is joined by dozens of others that have made student success their priority, including the Academic Success Center, new in 1998, which offers individual student consultations, thirty-minute workshops, diagnostic testing, learning related software, and referral services. Eastern's Office of Orientation now offers the Emerging Leaders Program designed to give freshmen an opportunity to explore leadership traits and develop a personal leadership style, while Residential Life encourages students to develop leadership skills through participation in residence hall government, providing them significant opportunities to lead their fellow students by developing proposals and recommendations on policy revisions, to execute new programs, and to develop skills that will serve them well after graduation. For many years this system has been recognized by regional and national organizations as one of the top residence hall leadership programs available.

Likewise, the Office of Career Services, which guides underclassmen through career assessment, values clarification, occupational outlook, networking, social skill enhancement and job shadowing, all of which support effective choices of academic majors and personal development, has significantly increased its support services during the last decade. It now assists upperclassmen with leadership opportunities, internships, graduate school applications, and the fine points of job etiquette, bridging the transition to the work world. It also connects employers to well trained college graduates while utilizing the most cost effective and efficient recruitment technology that is available in the marketplace. And it continues to assist alumni long after they have graduated. Owing to the quality of the service it provides employers, Career Services was named one of the top fifteen U.S. University Career Centers in a 2001 benchmarking study, in addition to being named a Top 35 U.S. University Career Center by Kaplan's survey of high school guidance counselors.

Along with the strong relationships students build with the faculty, this network of student support services plays a critical role in ensuring that Eastern students will be retained and will graduate at rates higher than state and national averages, and that they will be satisfied with their university experience. Currently, Eastern's overall retention rate is over 78%, while the six-year graduation rate is 60%. Similarly, rates for minority students are 80% and 44%, respectively. The 2003 survey of nine-year-out alumni yielded results consistent with previous surveys: 88% (615) were positive or strongly positive about Eastern; 98% were at least somewhat positive.

### **The Extension of Teaching and Learning into External Communities**

Eastern extends teaching and learning into its external communities through a variety of programs designed to improve area schools, assist businesses and industries to develop a more effective workforce, and support the physical, mental, intellectual, and cultural well-being of Illinois citizens. Such programs reinforce how important teaching, learning, and community service partnerships are, as they extend the traditional classroom into the Charleston community, the Coles County region, the state of Illinois, and beyond.

Both the School of Continuing Education (SCE) and the College of Education and Professional Studies (CEPS) play key roles in enabling the university to extend teaching and learning into its external communities. SCE does so by offering credit and non-credit courses at ten accessible area centers in the state. CEPS, in turn, has developed a distinguished record of securing grant monies to support collaborations intended to improve teaching and learning throughout Illinois, including the Minority Teacher Identification and Enrichment Program, the New Leaders Assistance Service for



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beginning principals, and the Techshare program, which offered over fifty scheduled professional development opportunities highlighting learning technologies for almost three hundred P-16 educators involved in teacher preparation programs during the Fall 2002 and Spring 2003 semesters. A new program, Adventure of the American Mind, is training in-service and pre-service classroom teachers and teacher education faculty to access, use, and produce curriculum utilizing the Internet and the digitized primary source materials from the collections of the Library of Congress. These are just a few of the dozens of grant-funded programs the college has secured.

Other examples of Eastern's work at extending the boundaries of its teaching and learning activities are not new, but they continue to grow, to be successful, and to offer models for other institutions to emulate. Eastern strives to improve teaching at the primary and secondary levels via several annual conferences for public school teachers offered through the collaboration of the School of Continuing Education and academic departments. Each spring semester the Art Department, supported by the Illinois Art Education Association, Regional Offices of Education, and the Tarble Arts Center, hosts the Art Education Media and Methods Conference which draws more than 150 elementary and secondary art education teachers each year. Similarly, the English Department, with support from the Illinois Humanities Council, sponsors an annual literature conference for college and secondary school teachers. The History Department and Social Sciences Studies Program provide an annual conference for college and secondary school teachers, while the Department of Mathematics hosts the Illinois Council of Teachers of Mathematics Conference, serving over 1500 participants.

Educational partnerships with community colleges have increased dramatically since the last self-study. The university has developed seventy-two "2+2" programs with eleven different institutions, for example, providing transfer students with a "program map" that directs their course selection and ensures a seamless transition to Eastern. In Spring 2004, the university initiated a dual admission program with nearby Lake Land College; if the program is successful, it may be extended to additional community colleges. Since the program's inception in the late 90s, Eastern also has participated in the Illinois Articulation Initiative (IAI), a statewide program that established a "core" general education curriculum and several baccalaureate majors that transfer to more than one hundred participating colleges and universities and ensures that transfer students may progress through their programs as quickly and efficiently as native students. The university also is involved in the Course Applicability System (CAS) initiative, another statewide program that will allow students to search for programs at participating institutions by completing an online degree audit that compares program requirements. Eastern has just begun work on Phase I of the project, which will allow transfer students to view coursework equivalencies online.

Other outreach programs focus on improving the physical well being of Illinois citizens. For example, for several years, Eastern's Office of Safety Programs delivered "Seat Belt Convincer" and traffic safety programs to many thousands of school-age participants. Likewise, the Physical Education Department remains involved in two unique programs that are open to the public. The Adult Fitness Program is an exercise/fitness program available to members of Eastern's communities. For a minimal cost, participants have a health/fitness screening including blood pressure, resting heart rate, resting EKG, body composition, muscular flexibility, muscular strength, and complete blood lipid profile performed. Based on their results, a cardiovascular, muscular strength/endurance, and/or flexibility program is prescribed for them. The Director, Associate Director, and eight to ten exercise science graduate students are available at all work out sessions to monitor, supervise, and provide guidance to the 150 participants. A second program, offered to the public in conjunction with Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center, is the Phase III Cardiac Rehabilitation



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Program. A cardiac nurse, the Adult Fitness Director, and exercise science graduate students all help supervise and monitor cardiac patients referred by their physicians. This program allows thirty community members with heart /pulmonary disease the opportunity to exercise in a supervised setting at a very low cost.

One of Eastern's largest grants is Peace Meal, a program that assists senior citizens and their spouses by providing them a hot, nutritionally balanced meal five days a week. The program is sponsored by the School of Family and Consumer Sciences and is funded through the Illinois Department on Aging. It enlists the help of 1200 to 1400 volunteers across fourteen counties each year to deliver meals. More than forty organizations, including Rotary, Kiwanis, and related clubs and organizations, offer volunteer support to Peace Meal. Peace Meal serves lunch Monday through Friday at many different sites throughout fourteen counties in Central Illinois. For those who are not mobile, home delivered meals are available. Peace Meal has an annual budget of \$2.4 million. It meets a basic need for the elderly, provides internships for students enrolled in Department of Family and Consumer Sciences programs, provides employment to over 150 staff members who run the program, and provides community groups with a means to fulfill their own service requirements.

Last, Eastern's internal constituencies also engage with the community through cultural enrichment programs. Each year, for example, the Theatre Department produces six major plays, works that feature the collaboration of faculty, students, and staff and draw an average of 2624 attendees. Likewise, the Art Department invites community members to three major annual student and faculty exhibitions in the Tarble Arts Center and from seven-to-ten short exhibitions in the Burl Ives Studio Hall, while the Music Department's faculty and students offer eighty recitals and forty concerts each year. Another unit in the College of Arts and Humanities, the Tarble Art center, draws more than 15,000 visitors annually to exhibits, concerts, lectures, and literary readings.

Each year, Eastern serves many thousands of external constituents who might otherwise have no access to programming intended to improve the quality of their lives. Through these units and programs, Eastern connects to non-traditional, transfer, and international students and alumni; to professionals in business, industry, and education; to public school students; and to community members interested in health, safety, art, music, and theatre. Over 92% of the grants and contracts awarded at Eastern support service activities, an average of nearly five million dollars every year. Results of the NCA Self-Study Survey substantiate the effectiveness of these connections. Almost 74% of those who completed the NCA Self-Study Survey agreed or strongly agreed that Eastern is "responsive to constituents and community needs" (Item 18a); over 90% agreed at least somewhat. Likewise, almost 70% agreed or strongly agreed that "Eastern has developed services in response to the needs of its constituencies" (Item 18c); almost 89% expressed at least some level of agreement.

### **A Sound Program for Assessing Student Learning**

When the North Central Association team visited Eastern in Spring 1995, members commented that the campus had "lost its early leadership edge and momentum in assessment activities," and that "[s]pecific steps must be taken to ensure full implementation of assessment plans with a clear focus on student learning outcomes." At that time, the university's formal assessment program focused on the former general education program's nine broad goals: literacy, reasoning ability, quantitative analysis, historical consciousness, scientific awareness, social responsibility, aesthetic literacy, multicultural awareness, and intellectual curiosity. For the most part, these goals were undefined, and some of them were fairly ineffable. Too often, assessment in both the general education program



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and the major focused on program or course goals and objectives rather than on student learning objectives. A wide variety of assessment instruments were being used--ACT scores, the Writing Competency exam, the ACT-COMP, field tests in the major, licensure exams, focus groups, and surveys, for example. However, in hindsight, it is clear that because there were so many goals to assess, the assessment program focused more on identifying the next assessment instrument or completing the next assessment activity than on using the results to improve student learning. As a result, little of the well-intended and ambitious assessment plans devised in the early to late 90s was implemented fully.

It was no wonder, then, that the NCA team noted a number of specific areas where improvement in academic assessment was warranted. Since the last self-study visit, the university has addressed each of these concerns. Much of this progress is owing to the work of an Assessment Task Force, formed in Spring 1999 to refocus assessment on improving student learning, simplify assessment processes, and streamline committee structures; the Committee for the Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) which it created; and the Center for Academic Support and Achievement (CASA), to which assessment oversight responsibility was redirected in 2000.

The revision of Eastern's General Education Program (the "integrated core") occurred concomitantly with the development of a simpler, more efficient, more accountable plan for assessing student learning devised by the Assessment Task Force in 1999. Once the Council on Academic Affairs streamlined the goals of general education, the task force was able to focus assessment efforts on written and oral communication, critical thinking, social responsibility, and global citizenship; to identify associated assessment instruments; and to delineate processes for ensuring that assessment data are collected, analyzed, and used to improve student learning. Direct measures employed for General Education Program assessment include the Electronic Writing Portfolio, comprising documents students have written across their four years at Eastern; student speeches delivered in the introductory communication course and in the senior seminar; and the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal, which assesses students' critical thinking abilities. (Faculty use standardized scoring rubrics to assess both written and oral communication skills.) Eastern also uses the Global Citizenship Survey, an affective assessment instrument developed by the institution, as the primary measure for this general education goal. Students complete the survey at Freshman Orientation and then again in senior seminar.

All academic departments submit annual major assessment plans using a simple format available online. Major assessment plans increasingly focus on direct assessment measures and longitudinal studies of results, and departments couple primary trait analysis with portfolios, performances, presentations, papers, field and licensure exams, internships, and practica; rely on focus groups, advisory groups, and peer evaluators; and collect affective data from exit and alumni surveys. This shift away from the "I grade; therefore I assess" attitude has been a major achievement of the post-1998 assessment program. The Director of the Center for Academic Support and Achievement analyzes each plan and provides feedback to each department. And at the end of each spring semester, CASL revises the university-wide assessment plan so that it details the specific activities planned for the next year and the broader goals planned for the near future. Thus, coupled with university-wide surveys of graduating students and alumni, Eastern's assessment program uses multiple measures to assess and improve student learning at multiple levels, course, program, and institutional.



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In 2002, the Office of Academic Affairs began sponsoring the Provost's Award for Achievement in Academic Assessment to recognize departments that, in the process of systematically assessing their majors' achievement of learning objectives, adhere to established best practices in assessment, address university-wide learning goals in the major, demonstrate continuous progress in implementing their assessment plans, and cultivate a culture of assessment. Three awards are given each year, amounting to \$2500, \$1500, and \$1000 one-time operating budget increases.

The university now offers an assessment website that provides a wealth of resources related to assessment (writing learning objectives, creating rubrics based on primary trait analysis, assessing group presentations, and so on). CASL hosts annual assessment workshops as part of its Assessment Day activities, which are conducted by external experts who focus on issues of interest to the campus community. Thus, speakers such as Barbara Walvoord, Trudy Banta, and Doug Eder have shared information on enhancing critical thinking, enlarging faculty involvement in assessment, and adhering to best practices in assessment. CASA has continued to produce the *Assessment Update*, an informational newsletter shared in hard copy form at least once a semester. Electronic copies are archived on the assessment website.

Annually, major assessment plans now are due in conjunction with other planning documents such as planning initiatives, new budget requests, and accountability reports. As a result, new assessment initiatives are considered during planning and budget review and development, and Eastern has received new funds to support its assessment program: In FY96, the university received \$100,000 for assessment, but through generic requests to improve the academic base, Eastern has provided additional new support to assessment through the Center for Academic Support and Achievement, the unit responsible for directing it. In addition, the Illinois Board of Higher Education has mandated that all programs must systematically assess student learning. It monitors this requirement by requiring institutions to report on assessment progress in state-mandated program reviews and in an annual accountability report.

Chapter Three explores student learning assessment at Eastern in more detail. It is honest in its depiction of the university's progress, but it also is careful to identify areas where improvement is still desired. At the same time, as this discussion underscores, the institution has come far in the last decade. By employing equal measures of vigilance and practicality, Eastern will continue to move its student learning assessment agenda forward, for despite some resistance, it is generally understood that assessing learning is a vital step *in* the teaching process, not just another duty external to it.

### **A Common Focus on Using Resources Wisely and Building for the Future**

Chapter Two describes the impact of Eastern's continued loss of appropriated funding from the state of Illinois as its costs continue to escalate. In the wake of the resultant erosion of budgetary flexibility, Eastern is fortunate to have developed a culture that seeks out efficiencies so that it may protect what is most central to its mission, teaching and learning. Units throughout the institution have delayed filling non-instructional positions and have reallocated funds supporting lower priorities so that they may ensure support of higher ones. Efforts to increase external funding have resulted in a 117% increase in giving since 1997, and in a capital campaign that has receipted \$4.1 million in its first fifteen months. Collaboration also has eased some of the effects of the tight budget: University Housing and Dining routinely saves the academic area many thousands of dollars by providing space for classrooms as well as academic units displaced by remodeling projects, for example, and it has accepted reduced value for facilities turned over to the academic area, including the small residence



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hall which now houses the Center for Academic Support and Achievement and a residential dining center that was converted to a computer lab. To increase resources available to teaching and learning, Eastern also examined the viability of eliminating appropriated funding for non-instructional entities such as the Radio/TV Center and Athletics. Because the Radio-TV Center has external funding sources, it voluntarily developed a plan to return about 75% of its appropriated funding to the university over a three-year period. On the other hand, a task force determined that reducing Athletics' dependence on appropriated funding was not feasible.

Eastern's emphasis on continuous improvement through efficiency enhancement is most readily visible in several Business Affairs' initiatives. For example, near the end of Eastern's last self-study period, it began to participate in the Governor's Pilot Energy Conservation Initiative. This program linked energy efficiency improvement opportunities with performance contracting: An energy services company (ESCO) performs an investment-grade energy audit of the facility, and then it designs and installs energy conservation measures (ECMs) which meet required energy savings/payback criteria. The performance of the selected ECMs are guaranteed by the ESCo to save sufficient utilities dollars over the ten-year life of the performance contract agreement to pay back the original project installation costs, including debt service. Through Eastern's participation in performance contracting, three ESCo projects have resulted in energy efficiency improvements and infrastructure upgrades amounting to \$16.7 million. Of this amount, reductions in deferred maintenance are estimated at \$13.2 million. In December 2003, Eastern was distinguished in a report to the 93rd Illinois General Assembly as having the lowest utilities cost per square foot among all Illinois' public universities.

Business Affairs also took seriously a state mandate requiring all Illinois universities to reduce their waste stream 40% by the year 2000. Not only has Eastern's voluntary recycling program helped to meet this goal, but it also created a more environmentally responsible campus, provided student employment opportunities, and enabled the university to participate in a joint project with a local school district's training program, providing real work experiences for students who are developmentally disabled. The collection and processing of recycled paper and cardboard has increased from two hundred tons to nearly three hundred tons annually. Eastern's recycling program continues to win awards from such entities as the National Recycling Coalition and the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Business Affairs has initiated master contracts with preferred vendors, thereby reducing costs associated with large purchases such as residence hall food, copy machines, and office supplies. It also has implemented innovative technologies to improve business processes, including such programs as e~Print, a web-based report distribution system that mirrors the university's Financial Records System accounting software and has increased the speed and security of report distribution, as well as reducing paper costs and staff hours formerly dedicated to the report distribution process; the Purchasing Card (P-Card), which has enhanced the university's procurement processes by improving efficiency in purchasing low dollar goods and services by directly giving departments buying power; the Procurement Bulletin, which went on-line, improving the formal bidding process, greatly increasing the vendor base, and saving substantial publishing and printing costs; and the Financial Records System (FRS), which replaced the aging in-house financial package and is now at the core of all financial transaction processing at the university, providing university financial officers enhanced capabilities for financial management and a paperless method of requisitioning supplies and equipment via the purchasing module.



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Such careful use of resources has helped the institution to make progress on its highest priorities. As a result of the institution's vigilance, for example, faculty salaries have increased significantly, so that depending on rank, salaries currently are at or near peer means. Faculty and staff development opportunities also have been enhanced. At the time of the 1995 Study, the NCA Site Visit Team expressed the concern that "[f]aculty and staff professional development opportunities need to be greatly expanded. Resources need to be devoted to enhancing travel to conferences, workshops, and seminars." Since then, the university has created a series of on-campus workshops, seminars, and related instructional opportunities, and it has increased the financial resources available to faculty through campus-wide competitions. A new web site provides faculty with easy access to information about opportunities and activities, while two new programs were created to direct and coordinate development programming: The Faculty Development Workshop Series includes a comprehensive set of workshops for faculty that are offered in collaboration with other campus offices, while the Faculty Circles Program at Eastern, a joint effort of the university and University Professionals of Illinois, provides a development and acculturation experience for new faculty, assisting them in making the transition to full-time academic work and a career at Eastern. The program provides a wide range of mentoring assistance to new faculty, including advice, social support, information, coaching and friendship, and helps them to develop social networks outside their academic departments. Since the last NCA site visit, Eastern also has re-conceptualized its New Faculty Orientation. The orientation now organizes new faculty into small groups to facilitate interaction and discussion. The groups meet at various campus locations prior to the first week of classes, but they also have opportunities to participate in focused discussions and presentations throughout the year. Since the last self-study period, funds supporting faculty travel have more than doubled, and Summer Research Grants have been increased from \$50,000 to \$80,000. Also new since the last review is the TEAM Professional Development Grant program available through CATS.

Professional development opportunities for staff also have been enhanced by Human Resources' new Office for Training and Development, which offers a full-time Training Coordinator and a full-time Training Assistant. The Office for Training and Development provides numerous opportunities for staff development, including the nine-module "Leading Edge" supervisory development program; the "Fiscal Agent Toolbox," currently consisting of information presented in eleven topical workshops; and fourteen stand-alone workshops on topics such as communication, dealing with difficult people, leadership styles, team building, goal development, customer service, and time and stress management.

While there still is room for improvement, evidence of the impact of the institution's efforts to enhance professional development is visible in responses to the NCA Self-Study Survey. Almost 87% of the faculty, civil service personnel, and administrators responding expressed at least some degree of agreement that Eastern "provides opportunities for professional growth" (Item 10g), with 60% agreeing or strongly agreeing. Almost 37% felt that professional development opportunities actually had improved (Item 11c).

In its 1995 visit, the NCA team also identified deferred maintenance as a "long-standing problem that must be addressed in an aggressive manner." Recent studies estimate that deferred maintenance needs on buildings funded with appropriated dollars total \$101 million, or \$71 per square foot. This is, in fact, a decrease over 1999, when deferred maintenance was estimated at \$80 per square foot. This decrease has resulted from a significant increase in annual funds devoted to deferred maintenance projects, but more importantly, from the completion of the Booth Library renovation project and the new Human Services building, the beginning of the Fine Arts Building renovation,



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and, ironically, the Blair Hall fire: Insurance funds will be used to renovate the building, effectively removing its projects from the capital renewal list. Efforts to reduce deferred maintenance have been aided by the development of a Campus Master Plan that, in 1999, became the guiding force for facilities and grounds development at Eastern. The Campus Master Plan documents the vision for the campus in addition to providing an important planning tool; it is the vehicle by which the entire campus community may become involved in the university's future physical development.

While much work remains to be done, Eastern has made great progress at improving its physical facilities in the last decade. Every project on the list that follows has helped the university improve teaching, learning, and/or support services and enhanced recruitment and philanthropic efforts. As such, each represents an investment in the institution's future:

### **Capital Improvements Completed Since the Last Self-Study**

#### **Baseball Stadium & Dugouts**

A reinforced concrete structure with press box above and storage space below was constructed at the existing baseball field.

\$872,700

585-seat capacity

#### **Booth Library Renovation & Addition**

This project consisted of a modest addition and complete renovation of all systems and finishes to the original 1948 structure and 1968 addition.

\$23,550,000

23,798 SF new space

157,800 SF renovated space

#### **Chemical Storage Facility**

A storage facility was constructed as a central depository for chemicals used in laboratories and maintenance areas until such time they can be removed from campus.

\$921,000

3,500 SF

#### **Chilled Water Loop**

Multiple projects to connect major buildings on campus via chilled water loop to increase reliable delivery of cooling and decrease cost of cooling for campus. Also included other utilities when appropriate for the excavations.

\$4,000,000

#### **Commemorative Courtyard**

An exterior courtyard consisting of brick pavers with stone benches and landscaped areas was created in the adjacent to the library quad area.

\$262,000



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### **Football Stadium**

Renovation of the existing football locker rooms, offices, concession areas, and additional space for offices and meeting rooms.

\$1, 980,000

6500 SF new space

9500 SF renovated space

### **Human Services Building**

This is a new facility that replaced the Clinical Service Building scheduled to be demolished in preparation for an expanded Fine Arts Facility.

\$6,700,000

38,985 SF

### **Indoor Track Replacement**

This project replaced the original indoor track and infield surface.

\$533,000

59,250 SF

### **MLK Union Foodcourt**

A modest addition and renovation of existing space in the Union created a new foodcourt.

\$4,180,000

4700 SF new space

11100 SF existing space

### **Neal Welcome Center**

To amplify development efforts, a new welcome center was built off-campus; it opened in 2002. The facility serves as a welcome, orientation, and information center for families seeking information about Eastern Illinois University and the community of Charleston. It was built with private donations from the Neal family; no public funds were used for its construction.

\$1,800,000

7000 SF new space

### **Network Infrastructure**

The existing IBM Token Ring network was completely replaced with new fiber optic backbone, Cat 6e cabling in academic buildings, and new electronics in all of the data closets on campus.

\$5,600,000

### **O'Brien Field Synthetic Turf**

The existing grass surface was replaced with a synthetic turf using recycled rubber material.

\$553,700



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### **Outdoor Track Resurfacing**

The existing outdoor running track was resurfaced using recycled rubber material.

\$393,400

### **Parking Projects**

Several parking projects have been completed, including new lots at 4<sup>th</sup> & Garfield, East of Buzzard Hall, North of Buzzard Hall, South of Burl Ives, and South of Lantz, South of Tarble Arts. Improvements to 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Street have created lost parking spaces.

\$742,000

686 additional spaces

286 lost spaces

400 net gain

### **Physics Observatory**

Through generous donations, the Physics Department acquired a new observatory that houses a 16 inch Schmidt-Cassagrain telescope.

### **Recreation Fields Improvements**

Four softball/football intramural fields were constructed; two of them are lighted for nighttime play.

\$378,000

### **Tarble Arts Addition**

This addition includes a multipurpose area, e-gallery, meeting room, office, and small kitchen to enhance the existing facility.

\$2,318,000

6,000 SF

### **Conclusion**

NCA Self-Study Survey respondents identified Eastern's academic reputation, retention and graduation rates, the priority it places on students, the close relationships students are able to build with faculty and staff, the quality of the faculty, small class sizes, and reasonable costs as among the university's greatest strengths. Each one is the direct result of the institutional attributes this chapter has highlighted. These attributes--an emphasis on learning partnerships; the effective integration of technology in teaching and learning; a network of services that support student achievement; the extension of teaching and learning into external communities; a sound program for assessing and improving student learning; and a common focus on using resources wisely and building for the future—are important individually. However, their real impact occurs because the campus community engages them simultaneously, with the understanding that Eastern's success depends on the continued commitment to partner to support and protect the university's teaching and learning mission.